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**How the
Pennsylvania Historical
Commission
Serves the People**

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL
COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1942

The Pennsylvania Historical Commission Serves the People

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This booklet was prepared by Donald H. Kent, Associate State Historian, under the direction of Donald A. Cadzow, Executive Secretary, and Sylvester K. Stevens, State Historian.

The Pennsylvania Historical Commission, official historical agency of the Commonwealth, has as its chief purpose the awakening of interest and pride in the historic past of Pennsylvania, as a means of inspiring patriotism and good citizenship. By arousing pride in what Pennsylvanians have done in the past for the State, for the Nation, and for mankind, the Commission seeks to build up and encourage sound patriotism and true civic feeling. This basic purpose has been carried out in many and varied activities, ranging from the preservation of historic shrines and the placing of markers, to the publication of books and pamphlets and newspaper articles, the broadcasting of radio plays, the encouragement of history clubs in the schools, and the archaeological excavation of Indian sites. In its whole program the Commission has been striving to make Pennsylvania's rich historical heritage a source of inspiration and enlightenment to her people.

This endeavor becomes doubly important in time of war, when a strong spirit of loyalty to American ideals and democratic traditions, a deep and sincere love of country, and a willingness to endure hardships and make sacrifices for the cause of freedom, are supremely necessary. The Historical Commission can make its greatest contribution toward victory by helping to build up and maintain these attitudes, to which the term *morale* is usually applied.

The entry of the United States into the Second World War found the Historical Commission willing and eager to do its

part, and fully agreed to dedicate its resources and energies to the paramount national purpose of winning the war. It had already formulated plans and made a beginning of cooperation with the defense program. Its obvious tasks were to assist in arousing and strengthening public morale, to prepare and record the history of Pennsylvania's part in the conflict, and to encourage the preservation of cultural resources from the ravages of war. Its normal peace-time activities were adjusted in accordance with these new and urgent demands.

Promoting Morale and Citizenship

In close cooperation with the American Unity Committee of the State Council of Defense, the Commission is carrying on a well-balanced program of morale activities, which include newspaper articles and radio broadcasts of inspiring chapters from Pennsylvania's great past, as well as a series of leaflets and pamphlets of similar nature. The slogan, "Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy," is the keynote and general title for all this material.

Radio Plays. Some twenty-six stations now carry into the very homes of the people of the State the message of the Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy radio series, which seeks to present the lesson that Pennsylvania in view of her past accomplishments has a special responsibility in the fight for freedom today. The broadcasts are by means of electrical transcription on records prepared under the direction and supervision of the State Historian. The series began in February, 1941, with the thrilling story of Washington at Valley Forge, and continued with a dramatization of the founding of Pennsyl-

vania by William Penn. Other subjects include the building of Perry's fleet at Erie, the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, the story of John Barry and the creation of the United States Navy, the origin of the Marines, the rise of the steel industry, and the fight for free public schools. These are only a random selection of topics, for more than forty transcriptions have already been made and broadcast.

The broadcast of these transcribed historical dramas does not, however, end their usefulness. The transcriptions are made available when possible for use in the schools. For the use of schools which do not possess equipment for playing radio transcription records, the Commission has had them re-recorded on standard phonograph records which may be purchased at relatively small cost. These radio plays will, therefore, have both an immediate value for the people who hear them on the air, and a continuing value for the children who hear them in connection with their school work.

Newspaper Series. The newspapers of the State are another important means of reaching the general public with historical and patriotic material. "Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy," a weekly newspaper release in column form, prepared in the Commission office, was inaugurated in April, 1942. Efforts were made to secure editorial contacts through local historical societies. A number of newspapers picked up the column from the beginning and have carried it regularly. In early October of 1942, it was decided to build up the column circulation through direct editorial contact. During "National Newspaper Prestige Week," October 1-8, two special

press releases covering the contributions of the Pennsylvania Press to the national war effort were sent out by the Commission. The greater majority of Pennsylvania's 135 daily and 400-odd weekly newspapers gave creditable space to these releases. Supplementing the straight news release, a special column in the "Keystone of Democracy" series, entitled "Watchman, What Of The Night?" was mailed to every newspaper in the State. This column traced the history of the newspaper in Pennsylvania, and was compiled especially as a tribute to the Fourth Estate.

As a result of the Newspaper Survey conducted by the War History Division, valuable "leads" were obtained for the subsequent development of the weekly newspaper column. Follow-up letters were immediately mailed to all publishers and editors who had signified a willingness to consider material of an historical nature. As a result, the coverage of the column increased by almost fifty per cent, and is now published in every representative section of the State. Particular attention was given to development of the daily circulation newspapers, which naturally reach the largest number of readers. At least twenty-five daily newspapers are now carrying the column. They are given latitude in their use of the material, and some editors have utilized it in editorial and other feature copy, crediting the Commission in each case. The majority of the papers, however, publish the copy as it is released. The weekly press also makes regular use of the material.

The series already has covered many major points of Pennsylvania history, always linking the past to the present, and emphasizing the rich heritage of the people

of the Commonwealth in the foundation and preservation of democracy and democratic ideals. Thirty-five columns, each averaging a thousand words, have been prepared and distributed. In groups of fifteen, the columns will be collected and made available in booklet form to educational institutions and historical organizations.

Patriotic Pamphlets and Leaflets. The publication of printed or mimeographed material designed to arouse pride in the historical heritage of Pennsylvania is the third phase of the Commission's morale activities. This material is made available to schools, historical societies, club groups and similar organizations, with the object of encouraging increased study of Pennsylvania history, thus achieving the main purpose of heightened patriotism.

The first of these pamphlets, *Pennsylvania History and Morale*, is an essay on the importance of State and local history as a morale resource, making practical suggestions as to their use. *Pennsylvania History in Outline* is a brief summary of the State's history which suggests topics for special programs by schools and by clubs. *Some Pennsylvania Leaders* contains brief sketches of the lives of notable citizens who have contributed to the development of American institutions and ideals or who have served in the armed forces in their defense. *What to Read about Pennsylvania* is a list of historical fiction and of the outstanding books relating to the history of the State, and is designed as an aid in planning reading and study programs. Other bulletins projected in this group include *Pennsylvania in the Wars for Democracy*, the story of Pennsylvania's part in the American Revolution,

the Civil War, and the First World War; and *Pennsylvania in the First Year of the Second World War*, the story of Pennsylvania's war effort from December 7, 1941, to December 7, 1942. Thousands of these pamphlets have been distributed in every section of the Commonwealth.

A series of mimeographed bulletins or leaflets which—like the radio series and newspaper articles—center around the slogan “Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy,” are published from time to time near the dates of significant events with which they deal. Thus, leaflets on *Washington in Pennsylvania* and *Lincoln in Pennsylvania* were published in February, 1941; a leaflet on *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania*, in March; and a leaflet on *The Fight for Free Schools in Pennsylvania*, in April. A leaflet on *Pennsylvania and the Formation and Ratification of the Constitution* was distributed in December, 1942. The Commission-sponsored Pennsylvania Historical Survey has mimeographed and distributed these publications, which were sent to all the high schools in the State.

The survey has also mimeographed the radio scripts, for which there has been considerable demand by school teachers and by program chairmen of clubs. A limited number of the newspaper articles is also available in mimeographed form to libraries and schools.

Junior Historian Clubs. On April 16, 1942, delegates from junior historical clubs in several high schools of the State met at Harrisburg, and formed a State-wide organization of their own called the Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians. Thus was brought nearer to realization a program developed jointly by the Com-

mission, the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, and the Pennsylvania Social Studies Council, in order to create an active interest in State and local history among school children.

To promote the idea of history clubs in the schools, the Commission temporarily added to its staff a high school teacher who had successfully organized such a club in her own school. During the summer and fall of 1942, she visited hundreds of teachers and school administrators, persuading them to organize clubs, and advising as to programs. Many of the mimeographed leaflets and printed pamphlets were used to advantage in this campaign, and a special *Manual on the Organization of High School History Clubs*, prepared by another teacher, was issued. Here is morale work in its most fundamental sense, for the children who today take pride in Pennsylvania's historic heritage will be patriotic citizens tomorrow.

Serving Community Organizations. The pamphlets and leaflets published by the Historical Commission have been distributed to numerous community organizations throughout the Commonwealth, as an aid in planning and preparing programs on Pennsylvania history. Women's clubs, teachers' organizations, community forums, patriotic societies, granges, and service clubs, all find a real use for this material in their present-day activities which necessarily lay much stress on patriotic citizenship. The Commission is cooperating directly with the American Unity Committee of the State Council of Defense.

Local historical societies, with which the functions of the Commission are more naturally concerned, cooperate in these community activities, as well as in the

Junior Historian program and in the War History program, to be discussed later. The historical societies of the State are organized in the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, which boasts a total membership of more than thirty-four thousand. The Commission and the Federation cooperate closely, the State Historian serving as Executive Secretary. The societies are being encouraged to develop increased knowledge of local history as an aid to morale and a contribution to better citizenship.

Recording the Story of Pennsylvania's Part in World War II

The Pennsylvania Historical Commission was officially designated by the State Council of Defense on January 21, 1942, as the agency charged with collecting, preserving, and recording source materials essential to a full historical record of Pennsylvania's current war effort. It thus became the first State war history agency in the country. At the end of hostilities the Commission will undertake the preparation of a proper and adequate history of Pennsylvania's part in the war. In the meantime, reports will be prepared to acquaint the public with Pennsylvania's accomplishment in the war effort. In this way the war history program is of value in the maintenance of public morale.

State Records of the War. The Commission will collect all available source materials relating the history of Pennsylvania's part in the war and the effect of the war on the State, with special emphasis on matters of State-wide interest. This task consists to a large extent of clipping newspapers, for the newspaper is the chief record of daily events. Hundreds of clip-

pings are received weekly from the State Newspaper Clipping Bureau, and this service is supplemented by subscribing directly to a number of the newspapers in the State, and clipping these for additional data. With the cooperation of the WPA, these clippings are mounted and filed according to a classification system devised to make the material on any given subject readily available. The subjects covered by this classification include the social, economic, and political aspects of the war, as well as the purely military. The outstanding accomplishments of Pennsylvanians outside their State are also recorded.

In addition to the newspaper clippings, the Commission also collects information from the various State departments and from those agencies of the Federal Government which deal with Pennsylvania. The Governor's Office and the State Council of Defense have been most helpful, especially by furnishing files of news releases and clippings which they gathered before the Commission started to collect war history material. This includes regular publications and news releases. Another important source of information is provided by various private organizations, such as the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, the State Federation of Labor, and the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association. These organizations are making their publications available to the War History Office of the Commission. In addition, the Commission is cooperating with such groups in preparing surveys of the accomplishments of their members. This is one of the most important tasks that can be performed by the Commission, as it brings to light information which would otherwise be forgotten, and makes it available for current

use. The first of the surveys was made in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers' Association.

Local War History Agencies. To prevent the files of war history records from reaching an unmanageable size, the Commission's collection is limited to a record of events of State-wide significance. Thus, the activities of the State Council of Defense are included, but not the activities of local Defense Councils. To cover such local activities, libraries, historical societies and other organizations are encouraged to collect records of their own communities' participation in the war. A manual was prepared to guide these organizations in gathering and organizing these collections, and made available to anyone interested on request. Historical societies were invited to take part in the program at the annual meeting of the State Federation, and the program was presented to the libraries at all the district meetings in the State. These were supplemented by letter and personal contact. As a result, there are at present organizations collecting war history records in almost every county of the State. When the Commission receives clippings which are local in character, they are sorted and distributed to these local depositories. In this way, the war history files are decentralized, with materials of State-wide importance on file in Harrisburg, and material of local importance in local depositories. The *War History Manual* was a pioneer in its field. Requests for it as a guide to other State war history programs have been received from Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Virginia.

War History Publications. The first "reports" from the war history files are

the weekly newspaper columns called "The State At War." Distributed through the medium of the *Capitol News*, this column is carried by about fifty newspapers. By no means a complete or formal history, it attempts to give a brief summary of outstanding accomplishments by Pennsylvanians during the previous week. At various times pamphlets covering various phases or various periods of Pennsylvania's war activities will be prepared, of which the report on the first year of the war is an example. This material is widely distributed as a part of the program to develop public morale. When the war is over, a competent, scholarly history of Pennsylvania's contribution to preserving democracy and of the political, social and economic effects of the war upon the State will be written and published by the Commission, utilizing as source material all the records which have been gathered, and incorporating the preliminary reports which the pamphlets and newspaper columns represent into this final study.

Preserving Pennsylvania's Historical Heritage

The historical heritage of the people of Pennsylvania is made up not only of books and manuscript records but also of material remains—buildings, historic sites, and Indian sites. To preserve this heritage in order that it may continue to inspire and to educate, is a major duty of the Historical Commission in both war and peace. These are part of the cultural resources of the State and Nation. The Federal Government has recognized the importance of cultural resources by setting up committees in the various States for the purpose of guarding and preserving the tangi-

ble evidences of the civilization which we are fighting to maintain. With the Pennsylvania Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Resources, organized and approved by the State Council of Defense, the Historical Commission has close relations. The State Historian serves as Secretary of this Committee, and the Commission is in full agreement with its purposes and aims.

Historic Shrines and Markers. The Historical Commission has been given the responsibility of administering, maintaining and preserving ten historic properties which Governors and legislatures have considered worthy of preservation as shrines commemorating events of Pennsylvania's past.

Pennsbury Manor, in Bucks County, recreates the country home of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania; and Governor Printz Park, in Delaware County, commemorates the site of the first white settlement within the boundaries of the State. Old Economy, at Ambridge, Beaver County, consists of the principal buildings of the former Harmony Society community, site of an interesting experiment in communal living and industry. Fort Augusta, at Sunbury, was a significant frontier outpost during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Cornwall Furnace, in Lebanon County, was one of the oldest iron works in Pennsylvania, and preserves a "defense plant" of the American Revolution. The Daniel Boone Homestead, in Berks County, commemorates the birthplace of America's most noted pioneer; and the John Morton Homestead preserves the birthplace of a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Flagship Niagara is a restoration of

the famous ship in which Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry won the Battle of Lake Erie. The surviving buildings of an unusual religious community make up Ephrata Cloister, which the Commission is now striving to protect from the ravages of time and weather. Pottsgrove Mansion, at Pottstown, is an outstanding example of colonial architecture.

These properties require continuous care and attention to keep them in condition befitting the historic shrines of a great Commonwealth. Every householder knows of the continual petty repairs that even the most modern building needs from time to time. This same need exists on these historic properties, with the added requirement that historical values must be considered. The endless tasks of housekeeping—dusting, cleaning, lawn mowing, trimming shrubs—require staffs of caretakers, while guards must be provided both to accommodate visitors and to protect the properties. Visitation to properties has been lessened by the war-time restrictions on travel, but even now the people of the localities where they are situated can find in them an ever-present reminder of the proud past of Pennsylvania.

Historical markers serve a similar purpose. Whether they commemorate a great event or mark a spot of merely local importance, they serve as reminders which fix historical facts definitely in terms of place in the minds of those who see them. Markers give substance to history, replacing mere space by something which interests and attracts the eye and mind. In war time, of course, markers cannot be erected because of the need for metal in national defense, but the 125 markers already erected by the Historical Commis-

sion—together with many others placed by private organizations with Commission approval—are a significant phase of the preservation of Pennsylvania's historical heritage.

Preserving Written Records. The various source materials for the writing of Pennsylvania history—documents, letters, diaries, and miscellaneous papers—are to be found not only in government archives and historical societies but in the files of business firms, in the collections of private individuals, even forgotten in attics and cellars. Intelligent action toward the preservation of the sources is essential, even in time of peace, and war-time hazards add greater urgency at the present time. Fundamental to the use of history as a builder of patriotism is the necessity to preserve the very elements or components of which history is constructed.

The Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources is concerned with this problem, as is the Historical Commission. The most certain way of protecting the materials for research in Pennsylvania history is by making duplicate copies, for by the laws of chance the more copies there are, the less likely that all would be destroyed either by the accidents of peace time or by the air raids and sabotage of modern war. One way of providing duplicates is by making typewritten transcripts, and the WPA Historical Survey did make many of these from source collections during the years before the war. This method, however, is slow and not to be compared with the new method of copying, the microfilm camera.

Even faded and fragile documents can be copied rapidly and accurately through this modern development of photography.

The Commission uses its own microfilm equipment to photograph especially valuable documents, as far as its resources will permit; and has joined with the Conservation Committee to persuade other governmental agencies and private organizations to undertake similar work. The Commission assisted in making arrangements for microfilming the Land Office records of the Department of Internal Affairs. By educating the public to preserve and guard with care all tangible evidences of Pennsylvania's great past, both the Commission and the Committee seek to preserve the very foundations of the scholarly and complete histories of Pennsylvania which they hope will some day be written.

Historical Research and Publication. The encouragement of historical research and the publication of its results are essential elements of the program to awaken interest in Pennsylvania history. Teachers, leaders of club programs, writers of popular articles, need printed materials giving authentic information. The Commission seeks to provide this not only by publishing patriotic pamphlets like those already mentioned, but by printing source books and scholarly studies of various phases of Pennsylvania history.

The list of its recent publications in the latter field is varied. *The Beginnings of the Petroleum Industry: Sources and Bibliography*, by Dr. Paul H. Giddens, prints important letters and lists the sources for the study of one of Pennsylvania's most important industries. *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, by Dr. Robert L. Brunhouse, is a political history of the State during the American Revolution. The WPA Historical Survey prepared *Wilderness Chronicles*, a source book

on the French and Indian War in western Pennsylvania, and *Travels in New France*, the journal of a French soldier in Pennsylvania. The Survey has also prepared fifteen volumes of a mimeographed edition of the *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet* for the Commission.

This is only a partial list of the historical works which the Commission has published and made available to the teachers and students of Pennsylvania history. Complete sets have also been sent to all the army camps where they have aroused much interest, according to letters received by the Commission. By its willingness to consider the publication of scholarly work in its field, the Commission offers an inducement for historians to undertake such work. In this practical way it is encouraging increased study of the history of our State.

Archaeology. Pennsylvania history began with the Indians, the first inhabitants. Their contribution to the development of the State may have been slight. The progress of early Pennsylvania was actually accomplished at their expense, as they were driven further and further to the west and north. Very little of our life and customs today can be traced to Indian influence, and the Indian element of the State's population today is wellnigh infinitesimal. Nevertheless, their story has a romantic appeal which has fascinated and continues to fascinate young and old. For many people the study of the Indians is the best approach by which to awaken interest in Pennsylvania history. For this reason Indian archaeology does have a definite value for the program of the Historical Commission.

Surveys have been conducted to locate

Indian sites, and mounds and villages have been excavated and studied scientifically. The results of this archaeological research have been presented in a number of publications, such as *Three Archaeological Sites in Somerset County*, by Mary Butler. The Commission has also published several studies of Indian life and customs, including *Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs*, by Gladys Tantaquidgeon and *The Tutelo Spirit Adoption Ceremony*, by Frank G. Speck and George Herzog.

Close cooperation with the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology has helped to awaken interest in the study of the Indians, and the Society's magazine often publishes brief reports of the Commission's archaeological work. The necessities of war have caused a lessening of activities in this popular phase of the Commission program, money being diverted to the more urgent demands of the morale program. However, with continued public interest, there is every reason to believe that the archaeological activities will be maintained at least on a reduced scale during the war, and that they will again take a prominent place in the Commission program when peace comes.

The Commission Organization

The Pennsylvania Historical Commission was created by an Act of the General Assembly, approved by Governor Tener on July 25, 1913. Subsequent acts, especially the Administrative Code of 1929, have increased its powers and duties, and somewhat altered its place within the structure of the State government, yet its essential nature and purposes have remained constant from the beginning. The Historical Commission is now a depart-

mental administrative commission of the Department of Public Instruction. Members of the present Commission include Ross Pier Wright, Chairman, Frances Dorrance, Edward R. Barnsley, Gregg L. Neel, Roy F. Nichols, and Francis B. Haas, ex officio member as Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Commission staff, which is responsible for carrying out its program, is made up of an Executive Secretary and State Anthropologist, a State Historian, an Associate State Historian, two Assistant State Historians, an Assistant State Anthropologist, a Research Assistant, and an Account Clerk. The Commission offices are in the State Museum Building, Harrisburg, on the main floor just north of the front entrance. To reach it by telephone, call the Capitol, extension 2690 or 3127.

In conclusion, the Pennsylvania Historical Commission is doing its utmost within its powers and resources to be of service to the people of the Commonwealth in these crucial times. By radio, by newspaper articles, by pamphlets, and by its contacts with historical societies and clubs, it strives to make the people realize that their State, Pennsylvania, has always been the Keystone of Democracy throughout the history of the American Nation, and that Pennsylvania today must live up to her proud traditions. Thus, on the home front, where the fate of nations has often been decided, the Historical Commission marshals the heroes of the past, recalling their glorious deeds to help in inspiring the people of Pennsylvania to maintain what they have won.

